

Police unions question Gov. Cuomo's order

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ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo's appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate police killings drew criticism Thursday from law-enforcement unions, who questioned whether the Democrat's blanket policy is appropriate.

Cuomo issued an executive order Wednesday requiring state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman to step in for the local district attorney to investigate — and if necessary, prosecute — police officers involved in the death of an unarmed civilian.

The move by Cuomo



N.Y. Gov.
**Andrew
Cuomo**

was the result of several high-profile incidents across the nation in recent years in which a police officer avoided indictment, including the death of Staten Island resident Eric Garner, a 43-year-old black man who died after being placed in a chokehold-like maneuver by a white officer.

But on Thursday, some police unions questioned why Cuomo made the change and whether it's appropriate for him to single law enforcement out.

"Although we agree

the governor is well within his rights to do so, it is the PBA's perspective that the system that was in place had been working adequately," said Thomas Mungeer, president of the New York State Troopers PBA. "It's unfortunate that during these times rules have to be made or changed based on our chosen profession as law enforcement officers."

Several district attorneys had previously expressed concern over Cuomo's plan, which he had promised in June after he and state lawmakers couldn't come to an agreement on a permanent, legislative solution.

As of Thursday afternoon, the state District Attorneys Association had not yet issued a for-

mal statement on Cuomo's executive order.

But Gerald Mollen, the Broome County district attorney and president-elect of the statewide group, told The New York Times he didn't see why Cuomo was curtailing their duties.

"We certainly don't see any reason why the 62 elected attorneys should have their responsibility taken from them," Mollen said, according to the Times.

Mollen, who was in Saratoga Springs for the District Attorneys Association's summer conference, did not return a phone call or email.

Schneiderman had lobbied Cuomo to grant him special prosecutor powers. At a news conference

Thursday, the Democrat pledged to cooperate with local prosecutors in the event that his office does have to take up a police-involved case.

On Thursday, Schneiderman set up a group of attorneys to handle any police cases that come his way, with the team being led by Alvin Bragg, an executive deputy attorney general who was previously a federal prosecutor.

The team also includes Paul Clyne, a former Albany County district attorney, and three other staffers who have prosecutorial experience.

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